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The **METROWEST
DAILY NEWS**

Natick Planning Board backs 9/27 plaza project

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Posted May 19, 2016 at 6:22 PM

NATICK - The Planning Board has backed a project to revitalize the 9/27 shopping plaza.

“This is going to be a very significant improvement to the old Building 19 site,” project attorney Jim Hanrahan said Thursday. “It will be much more attractive.”

The Planning Board on Wednesday took votes to approve the project, although the board's decision is still being finalized. Planners said they also wanted to review plans for rooftop mechanical systems when they are available.

Plaza owners Crosspoint Associates and Finard Properties plan to build a 2,000-square-foot coffee shop in the property's northwest corner. Changes to the existing plaza will be focused around bringing new tenants to part of the northern building, which includes the closed Building 19 store. The project will also create outdoor sales space for an existing flower and garden shop, officials have said.

The Planning Board spent time reviewing the parking lot layout as board members worked with the developers to improve safety and traffic flow while keeping in mind that the state plans to work on the intersection in the future.

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The board also spent time on signs. While most signs the developers sought fit in with Natick's sign rules, the board grappled with requests from tenants who face Rte. 27 to also have sufficient visibility on Rte. 9, Community and Economic Development Director Jamie Errickson said.

The board permitted some signs for seven years or until the completion of the Rte 9/Rte. 27 intersection project, whichever comes sooner. That allows new businesses to become established and drivers to realize what is in the refurbished plaza, Errickson said.

The intersection project may improve visibility for the plaza and enhance traffic flow, Errickson said.

Hanrahan said the unique site presented challenges for the board as it also looked to not set precedents.

"I think everyone worked very well together," Hanrahan said.

Errickson said he's pleased to see the improvements at the plaza. With the town embarking on a town-wide master planning effort, officials also want to work with the owners on the vision for that property and others by the intersection for the coming decades, Errickson said.

Hanrahan said his clients are finalizing tenants and are eager to move forward with the project.

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